

PRESENTATION OF UNC GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES

Saturday 18th July, 2020

"The core philosophy of the United National Congress is that our nation's greatest resource is our people. Build up our people, and we will build our nation! "

T&T family! UNC family! It is my absolute pleasure to speak with you today, as we get ready for the sweeping victory that is to come on August 10th!

Of course, things are different today, unfortunately I cannot see your smiling faces, and I cannot greet you as I love to do, but I am still happy that you can join us in this way.

It has been a long and difficult five years.

Our beloved nation is today in deep crisis – not because of COVID-19 – but because of five years of incompetence and mismanagement by the Keith Rowley administration which has blanked our nation.

My brothers and sisters. Tonight, I want to make a blanket statement on Keith Rowley. And I want to read again a few words from my speech on Thursday night which so upset the man. "I will give a description of someone and ask yourself when you hear it, who immediately comes to mind?

He is an aggressive tyrant forever intent on attacking and berating and bullying and blaming everyone but himself.

He has attacked from schoolchildren to women to the police to the judiciary to business leaders to religious heads to the media."

He is now attacking the WASA workers about sabotaging the water supply.

"Who am I talking about?

You see?

I don't even have to name the man yet you could fill in the blanks.

Talking about blanks.

What has blank done for Trinidad and Tobago in the last five years?

What has blank done for you?

Not a blanking thing!!!

So if he blanking you what will you do come August 10th?!

Blank him out of office and let's get Trinidad and Tobago working again!

So, it was clear that I was referring to him as a man who is known for blanking an entire nation by doing nothing or doing something very badly.

So I say to him, stop trying to inject race into the thing.

You have earned the title, Mr. Blank.

You have even blanked your own supporters!

But we will fill in the blanks for you on August 10th and get Trinidad and Tobago working again.

I know it's been hard on you, the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Government I led demitted office, we were facing some challenges, but we were managing those challenges, and most importantly – we had a plan to build on the work we did and continue developing our country and improving your lives.

In one fell swoop – this Rowley government came in and destroyed all the good work we did.

In their vindictiveness – they blanked the Couva Children's Hospital by refusing to open it for more than four years – saying all kinds of negative things about it, that it was a construction site, a waste of money - just blatant and vile lies.

That hospital is the first of its kind in the region, and it was fully equipped when we left it. But because it was built under my Government, they just blank it by refusing to open it and denying innocent children and others access to its benefits.

It took a pandemic for them to put the hospital into partial operation. But, have no fear, with your support we will return to office and ensure that that hospital is fully operational so that our citizens can benefit from world-class healthcare.

The man who has blanked the people of Trinidad and Tobago dares to demand another term in office while shouting, raving and ranting as he is prone to do always about our plan for Trinidad and Tobago.

But have you heard anything about his plan?

There is none! No plan!

Blank!

He even has a blank slate of candidates who have nothing to say about his nearly five years in office.

Keith Rowley is blank of ideas, vision, or plans.

He has no clue how to govern, and only cares about himself and his friends, family and financiers. If he cared about the citizens of this country – all citizens of this country, would he so callously dismiss the cries of people currently stranded outside of T&T?

It breaks my heart to listen to the voices of our citizens who have been denied entry while Mr. Blank agrees to have some 250 foreign cricketers some from countries with spikes in COVID 19 to come in and play CPL cricket.

Blanking our citizens but allowing CPL which stands to him for Citizens Preferred Last.

What about the thousands blanked who received nothing – no relief from this Government for losing their jobs due to COVID-19 or for the devastating floods that have affected people year after year? They get blank.

In the five years that Rowley has been Prime Minister, do you feel like your lives have improved? Do you feel like you have a Prime Minister who listens, and empathizes with you, and works to fix the problems you face?

Do you feel safer?

NO!

When you compare the terms in office – the People's Partnership which I led 2010-2015, and the Keith Rowley administration, it's like chalk and cheese.

UNC's Record VS PNM's Incompetence

Now, let's have a brief look at the two administrations.

The Rowley regime did nothing in the five years they've been in office. They blanked you all.

All they've held on to is their blame Kamla campaign in the hope that people will forget the work we did.

We created more than 55,000 jobs. Under Rowley close to 100,000 jobs have been lost. But they don't want you to focus on that!

These are families that are now struggling to cope, who cannot put food on their table.

We stabilized the economy and returned to a growth path. Under Rowley, our economy contracted. Official statistics from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) show that real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Trinidad and Tobago declined by a cumulative 8.8 percent between 2016 and 2018.

That is the sharpest contraction in more than three decades. But they don't want you to focus on that!

We brought serious crimes down to the lowest levels in over three decades. Under Rowley crime continues to spiral out of control.

More than 2,000 citizens have been killed during their term in office.

They try a thing by appointing a former UNC Minister Gary Griffith to help but try as hard as he can if Rowley doesn't have the political will and competence to support the Commissioner his hands are tied.

But all that will change when we return to office in a few weeks' time.

We established the Children's Life Fund to give critically ill children a chance to access life-saving medical care. Under heartless, hapless Rowley, sick children have been denied life-saving aid.

We built over 100 new schools. Under Rowley, schools that were almost complete were left to rot. The UWI Debe Campus remained shut.

We delivered clean water to 70% of the population. Communities across Trinidad complain of dry taps for months on end, under this Rowley regime. But, to hear Rowley tell it – it's sabotage. What rubbish. They have done nothing to fix the problems affecting water distribution and now water not flowing what does Mr. Blank do?

Blame Kamla and the UNC saying we turning off the taps. How more ridiculous can Mr. Blank get?!

You know I have to say that from Eric Williams to Manning, Rowley has to be the worst Prime Minister this country has ever been saddled with.

Manning was right when he said Rowley only knows to attack and destroy but he has never built anything in his life.

We constructed hundreds of kilometers of new roads, and drains which Rowley labelled us the "box drain" Government.

This Rowley administration has done little in terms of fixing or building drains, or roads.

The country's road infrastructure has deteriorated significantly.

I promise we will prioritize infrastructure development – roads, drains and bridges across T&T.

We built thousands of new homes. Keith Rowley is busy handing out keys to housing units constructed under the administration I led.

We built the Couva Children's Hospital, the San Fernando Teaching Hospital, and the Carenage Health facility, completed the Hospital in Tobago and started the Arima and Point Fortin Hospitals.

Mr. Blank has tried to take credit for all of these.

We built several police stations. While we worked to ensure the police have the tools to do their jobs, this Rowley Government has starved the TTPS of adequate funding, blanking their pleas for help.

We removed and lowered taxes. Rowley with his sidekick the Joker uncaring Colm Imbert increased taxes, added new taxes and is still eyeing the property tax! From the online tax today that is squeezing small businesses and entrepreneurs to VAT on more food items.

And these are just a handful - because there are too many blanks to fill in here.

I will never apologize for investing in our people because that is the simple mandate of any government - to protect, provide and invest in its people.

Our greatest asset has always been and will continue to be you.

Not oil, not gas, not land but you the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Close to \$300 billion has been spent by this Government, and what do they have to show for it?

Can you say if your life has improved under this Rowley government?

Compare your life today to how it was in 2015.

Do you feel safer? No! He blank you on that.

Do you have more money in your pockets for your children?

NO! He blank you on that.

Do you think your children have a brighter future today?

NO! He blank even the children from getting the laptops we gave.

The answer is no to all.

The only ones who can say yes are those who collect rent money and whose wives are getting state contracts.

You know who I am speaking of. There are the ones who Rowley making sure they don't get blank.

The UNC Team

Today, before you, you see the vibrancy, the strength, the diversity and the innovative spirit of the United National Congress.

You see a team of talented, capable, energetic and committed people, ready to work for you.

In our team, we have a mix of the young and not so young, and a team truly reflective of the diversity of our beautiful nation.

We issued a call for all persons interested in national development to come forward, and many answered that call.

Of course, some were not successful, but I can assure you that there is only love, respect and dedication to the UNC and our country.

I thank every person who submitted their nominations for consideration as a candidate, and I congratulate the confirmed candidates of our great party.

Today, we recommit to work for you, the citizens of T&T to improve your lives.

We have the vision, we have a plan, and we have a strong team. Together, we can work towards a brighter, more prosperous future for our country.

The UNC's Plan for Transformation of T&T

Unlike our opponents, the UNC spent several months developing our National Economic Transformation Master Plan.

We have a plan to transform and move our country forward.

We have built our Plan on five (5) interconnected guiding principles.

Principles that put you the people first in everything that we set out to do.

PRINCIPLE 1:

PEOPLE CENTRED DEVELOPMENT – GETTING PEOPLE BACK TO WORK.

The core philosophy of the United National Congress is that our nation's greatest resource is our people. Build up our people, and we will build our nation!

A new UNC Government remains dedicated to creating jobs and getting people back to work, safeguarding social equity and justice and protecting people's rights.

We commit to supporting lifelong learning, skills building and giving full rein to the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of all our citizens.

Putting you back into jobs is our priority so you can care for yourself and your family.

We have done it before, and I assure you we will do it again.

WAGE SUBSIDY

We are looking at a proposal for Government to give a percentage of wages of workers so that businesses can put people back to work. This is for those businesses that were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in workers being laid off. I will reveal more about this after discussions with the business community.

PRINCIPLE 2:

PRO-BUSINESS – ALLOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DRIVE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

We will follow a pro-business strategy, which allows the private sector to be the main driver of economic growth, transformation and sustainable development.

A new UNC Government will focus on improving the ease of doing business, tackling crime, removing obstacles to business growth and expansion, and attracting local and foreign investments by providing an enabling environment and necessary incentives.

Had it not been for the business incentives that my government put in place in 2010 to 2015, the economy today would have been much worse off.

These incentives that we would provide to stimulate economic activity will become the engine of the vehicle to get us where we need to be.

PRINCIPLE 3:

RESILIENCE – DEEPEN ECONOMIC REFORMS BUT WITH A HUMAN FACE.

Deepening economic reforms with a human face is a powerful force for sustainable development.

A new UNC Government will focus on –

- improving the economy's resilience to future shocks,
- bringing the budget into balance, stabilizing high public debt,
- protecting our external position
- safeguarding financial stability.

Reducing poverty, • closing the income inequality gap between rich and poor, and providing a safety net for the poor and vulnerable

One hand doesn't clap; we must collaborate to get it done because people's issues and needs must be balanced with policy and direction.

PRINCIPLE 4:

LOCAL CONTENT – GIVE PEOPLE A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND INDEPENDENCE.

Local content has the potential to stimulate broad-based economic development, which will give a sense of ownership and independence to everyone in our society.

All projects will include opportunities to maximize local content and local value-added through jobs, skills training, procurement of goods and services and technology transfer.

Reducing our high propensity to import will be addressed through a meaningful national, local content policy which focuses on our existing agriculture and manufacturing sectors as well as the entertainment industry

Side by side we stand must engender greater meeting we must not only talk the talk but walk the walk.

PRINCIPLE 5:

SUSTAINABILITY – PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

Trinidad and Tobago are blessed with abundant natural resources, from forests and wildlife to rivers and wetlands to coastal and marine ecosystems.

This natural environment is the foundation of our well-being and, by extension, our economy.

We must promote greater environmental stewardship, making more responsible use of renewable resources and ensuring water, food and energy security.

Our children and their children must inherit a better Trinidad and Tobago than us.

This isn't a time to choose between red and yellow.

It isn't about the party card you hold but about what you hold in your heart for Trinidad and Tobago, your family and the generations to come.

This is a time for us to join hands, heal and help create a better tomorrow. We just can't go on like this staring blankly at the future under a hapless Rowley administration.

A new UNC government pledges to create 50,000 new jobs by 2025.

At the heart of this job creation plan is the diversification of our economy. For far too long, our country's economic fortunes have been too closely linked to the energy sector.

We will encourage strategic investments in niche non-energy sectors where we have a strong competitive advantage, market opportunity and growth potential.

Our plan embodies a "business unusual" spirit. This spirit will see the private sector take the lead in strategic projects while the Government will play a facilitative role.

Of the many interventions, we have identified and singled out 12 prosperity engines spread across communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

These prosperity engines will mobilize and engage the private sector, both local and international, and their implementation will have large positive multiplier effects in kick starting the economic recovery, fostering growth and supporting diversification.

This is the kind of innovation and performance that Mr. Blank is incapable of creating.

The Twelve Prosperity Engines:

- 1. BRECHIN CASTLE AGRO-PROCESSING COMPLEX**
- 2. ORGANIC SUGAR AND SUCROSE DERIVATIVE MANUFACTURING FACILITY**
- 3. EAST WEST BIOTECHNOLOGY MANUFACTURING CORRIDOR**
- 4. SEVILLA DIGITAL INNOVATION PARK**
- 5. TAMANA "SOLARTECH" RENEWABLE ENERGY PARK**
- 6. WEST PORT OF SPAIN "TRINI CREATIVE ARTS STREET/AREA**
- 7. EAST PORT OF SPAIN STEELPAN MANUFACTURING FACILITY**
- 8. PIARCO AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE. REPAIR AND OPERATIONS HUB**
- 9. CEDROS/MORUGA SOUTHWEST PENINSULA ECONOMIC ZONE**
- 10. POINT GALEOTA ENERGY LOGISTICS HUB**
- 11. PLYMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CRUISE SHIP/MARINA COMPLEX**
- 12. TOBAGO'S FIRST LOCALLY BRANDED HOTEL**

You see how a UNC government will fill in the blanks?

UNC best option to move T&T forward

My friends, we can safely say today that the UNC is not only the best hope for T&T, but we are the last hope for our overburdened nation.

The UNC's plan and vision are based on people centered development and getting our country working again.

This election, do not complain about the things you're not prepared to change.

On August 10th fill in the blanks: put your X next to the rising sun!

The time is now – together we will rescue, restore and renew our great nation.

There has never been a time more important than now as there has never been such a crying need to remove the most incompetent, uncaring and uncouth Prime Minister ever seen in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

But we are united in our struggle and strong. Together we will get T&T working again!